

# Recent Additions to the Canadian War Museum's Vehicle Collection

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As a national institution the Canadian War Museum strives to bring before its audience the contributions of the military to national life. This is always impossible to accomplish in its fullest sense, and is perhaps especially so in the case of the CWM's vehicle collection. It is, of course, impossible to attempt to collect examples of every vehicle used or produced in Canada. With the passing of time examples in good condition of Canada's contributions to mechanized war are becoming very scarce. During the past year, however, the museum has made significant advances in adding to its collection of Canadian-made Second World War vehicles.

During this conflict, Canada was asked to provide vast quantities of arms, munitions, vehicles, and other equipment to support the Allied war effort. This huge national effort reached a peak with the production of more than 850,000 military vehicles.<sup>1</sup> Canadian vehicles, both of military and commercial patterns, were sent as far away as South Africa and Burma, where they earned a reputation for solid service.

Probably the major automotive success story associated with this wartime production was the Canadian Military Pattern (CMP) truck. The history of the CMP vehicle demonstrates what can be achieved when rival corporations unite their efforts rather than compete. In the late 1930s, at the request of the British War Office, the Canadian government agreed to oversee the task of developing a standardized vehicle that could be used by the armed forces of both countries. The task was assigned to both Ford of



Canada and General Motors of Canada (Chevrolet).<sup>2</sup> The requirements were for a standardized truck with as many interchangeable parts as possible, with the intention of reducing the ordnance tasks associated with these vehicles to a minimum. The companies could use their own drive lines and engines, but the cab and exterior components were to be essentially identical. Any number of different bodies for different functions could be fitted to a single chassis with a single-style cab. On the assumption that the war, when it came, would be centred on England, these trucks were equipped with right-hand drive, which of course was the opposite of the situation prevailing in Canada. Also, the ratio of cab to body length was to be kept as small possible, resulting in the snub-nosed appearance that was such a readily identifiable feature of these vehicles. Referred to as "as an efficient but supremely ugly-square-cornered cab," CMP vehicles were used widely by all Commonwealth armies and constituted a major contribution to the allied mechanized war effort.<sup>3</sup>

Although Ford and General Motors manufactured the cab and chassis for these trucks, the bodies were built by a number of manufacturers across Canada, called the "Steel Body Manufacturers Association." Examples were the Brantford Coach and Body Company, and Motor Coach Industries of Winnipeg.<sup>4</sup>

The Canadian War Museum has recently taken possession of seven Canadian Military Pattern vehicles, reflecting a number of the different functions for which they were used.



*An overview of the CWM's collection of Canadian Military Pattern vehicles in its Vimy House warehouse. From left to right, those in the front row are: CMP Ford 15 cwt. (CWM Collection); CMP Chevrolet HUP 8 cwt. (Wood donation); CMP Ford 60 cwt. Tipper (Wood donation); CMP 15 cwt. General Service (Wood donation). (Photo by Bill Kent, CWM Collection)*

Donated by Brian Wood, a Vancouver business man who has a large private collection of military vehicles, all vehicles were either painstakingly restored or else in last-used condition. Added to the six CMPs already possessed by the CWM, this acquisition makes ours one of the largest collections of CMP vehicles anywhere.

Among the newly acquired CMPs are two "C8A Heavy Utility, Personnel" Vehicles (HUP). This was the only instance of a CMP vehicle being completely manufactured, including the body, at the General Motors plant in Oshawa. In all 12,967 were made, including conversions to other purposes. Intended originally to replace all light utility vehicles, it made its first appearance in 1942. Although adapted for a number of roles, it was chiefly used for the transport of personnel, including press and radio personalities, which may be one of the reasons why it appears in so many photographs of the period.

The Wood donation also includes *two* 3-ton CMPs. One is a "Light Breakdown" vehicle,

equipped with a Garwood tow assembly. These vehicles were used for the recovery and/or towing of immobilized light vehicles, and saw service from the jungles of Burma to post-war Norway. The other, a 3-Ton "Tipper," was used in various roles by engineers to move earth or gravel, and specifically, in the case of Canadian Engineers, for road work and the construction of airfields.

The three remaining vehicles from the Wood donation are 15 cwt. "General Service" trucks. These vehicles, as the name implies, were used for a variety of purposes, chiefly involving the transport of men and supplies around bases and along fronts. One of these vehicles is a 4 x 2 (two of the four wheels being driven by the motor); two are 4 x 4, one a Ford and the other a Chevrolet.

These vehicles each represent one of Canada's major contributions to the war effort. They remind us of those mundane, and often overlooked, tasks associated with military logistics that allowed the Allied armies to function, and provided the essential

underpinnings to the winning of the war. Since they are operable, the CWM will be able to feature these vehicles in public didactic displays that show the vehicles actually performing the tasks for which they were intended.

Having acquired the above vehicles the CWM considered itself most fortunate to be recently offered an early CMP prototype. It was found in a scrap metal yard outside Petawawa, Ontario, by a local vehicle collector. Being an enthusiastic supporter of the CWM, he offered it to this institution. This "CMP Prototype III" was manufactured in the pilot stages of the CMP program in the late 1930s by Ford of Canada and, as the earliest example of a CMP vehicle in the CWM's collection, it makes an important contribution to the story of CMP development. Although not presently in displayable condition, in due course, with proper care, it will be restored to ninning condition.

In the early stages of the war the Dodge Chrysler Corporation, a large American branch plant in Windsor, Ontario, was not up to the scale of the other two major automotive companies, and never become involved in the production of CMP vehicles (although they did produce two examples of a CMP style cab for review, but nothing further came of it).<sup>5</sup> This exclusion from the CMP program allowed Dodge to continue the manufacture of commercial pattern vehicle into the early stages of the war, a number of which found their way into Canadian military service. Later Dodge was able to deploy its own series of military vehicles that grew out of these early commercial designs.<sup>6</sup>

In the summer of 1995 the CWM was pleased to accept from the estate of Mr. Frank Baker of Spruce Grove, Alberta, a commercial pattern 3-ton Dodge cab-over-engine truck. This vehicle had been used by Canadian military early in the war, before the CMP program was in full production. This style of truck was manufactured by Dodge Chrysler in 1941-42, and is very rare in that only 32 were produced.<sup>7</sup> It features a 159-inch wheel base on a total body length of 268 inches. Its 6-cylinder engine



**Top:** 1943 CMP C60S, Light Breakdown with Garwood towing assembly. **Bottom:** 1942 Dodge cab-over engine in civilian paint scheme. (Photos by Bill Kent, CWM Collection)

was adequate to drive a 14-foot tilt deck. Our example possess its "Royal Canadian Army Service Corps" data plate, which remains in its original position inside the cab above the right windshield. After its military service this truck was used for various purposes around Edmonton, Alberta. While serving as a tow truck with a Spruce Grove car dealership, a large reinforced bumper was added to the front for pushing. Eventually it came into the possession of Mr. Baker as a grain truck, which was its last "civilian" use before re-entering "service" in the Canadian War Museum collection.

Another interesting addition to the CWM's vehicle collection is of a later vintage, stemming from a recent incident in Canadian peacekeeping. On



1986 Bombardier litis shot up in Croatia on New Year's Eve in 1994, and received at the Canadian War Museum in 1995. Note the bullet holes in the windscreen. (Photo by Bill Kent, CWM Collection)

New Year's Eve, 1994, two soldiers of the Royal Canadian Regiment were driving an litis jeep along a road in Croatia when they came under attack from a force of Serbs. The vehicle was badly shot up and the two men were wounded, although they managed to escape with their lives. In the summer of 1995 this bullet-riddled vehicle was donated to the Canadian War Museum by the Department of National Defence. This vehicle will become a significant component of a new permanent exhibit at the CWM on peacekeeping, slated to open in June 1996. Here it will continue to serve as a poignant reminder of the dangers faced by young Canadian soldiers who have served, and continue to serve, in peacekeeping assignments around the world.

The CWM is striving to assemble a representative collection of vehicles to convey the story of Canadian involvement in the automotive aspects of modern war. With the support of the public and the collecting community this mighty endeavour continues.

## Notes

1. *Europe WW2*, Canadian Military Vehicle Series, (Paisley, Ont.: Quad Publications Inc., 1978), np.
2. Although the trucks were named for Chevrolet of Canada, they were produced at the General Motors Plant of Oshawa, as the two were closely allied, both in Canada and the United States.
3. K. Schreier, "US Army Chevrolets, 1920-1940," *The Complete Chevrolet Book*, p. 164.
4. "Basic CMP Bodies," *Canadian Military Vehicle Series No. 6*, Brantford, Ont., Canadian Military Historical Society.
5. W. Gregg, *Blueprint for Victory: the Story of Vehicle Design and Production in Canada from 1937-45*, (Rockland, Ont., Canadian Military Historical Society, 1981), p.109.
6. "Canadian Dodge T212, Chrysler Canada's 8-cwt 4x4 for the British Army, 1941," *Wheels and Track*, No.4, p.15.
7. *Truck Shop Manual, 1941-1942 Series*, (Windsor, Ont., Chrysler Corporation of Canada Limited, 1941), preface.

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